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The Magic of Coaching: Art Meets Science

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Jane sighed a deep, thought-provoking sigh - one that signaled to me that my coaching "talents" weren't really going to be useful. As a content area teacher, Jane saw no reason to increase her "literacy" vocabulary – that was the responsibility of the reading specialist. If the truth were known, Jane probably thought the whole idea of coaching was a waste of time. I had observed her social studies class and realized that there were several points that I could help her with, especially since she had a mixed ability group of students, some of whom did not speak English fluently. But how was I going to lead Jane to what seemed so obvious to me? How could I help her see that I wasn't the enemy, but merely someone who, like she, wanted the best for her students? How could I "artfully" make my case, and not alienate her?

As the title says, there is an art to coaching as much as there is a science. As literacy coaches and facilitators for many years, we have found that no matter how much we know about what makes coaching work, it isn't enough. We need to be able to translate that knowledge and apply it to coaching on a continuum – coaching that begins where the person being coached needs to start. This is sometimes easier said than done. As in all teaching situations, when you deal with human beings, the process of change can be messy and chaotic. We find this to be especially true when teaching adults. This article takes a look at how, as coaches, we can blend the art and science – how we can take the theory of professional development and tie it in with artistic skills so that there is a seamless transition that helps achieve the ultimate goal – students who can reach their maximum potential.

As teachers, for the most part, we work in isolation. We arrive at school, visit with colleagues briefly and then enter our classrooms, shut the door, only to emerge for brief periods of time. Even planning periods are mostly spent "catching" up on paperwork, making phone calls, etc. In the elementary grades teachers are sometimes afforded aides, and there may be other professionals who may be in the classroom from time to time to assist student with exceptionalities. Middle school and high school teachers face an even greater potential for isolation due to campus size, numbers of students, and divisions by specific content areas, although vertical and horizontal planning seems to be helping eliminate some of the isolation (Sturtevant, 2003; Morton, 1993). But most of the time, we work our magic alone. This isolation can be addictive. Consequently, we get so accustomed to being alone that when we are asked to

participate in professional learning opportunities or in school communities that require working with groups, we find it uncomfortable.

It has been our experience that a lot of teachers don't fully appreciate professional learning opportunities. They see them as intrusive and not a good use of their time (Puig & Froelich, 2007). It's no small wonder, given that until the late 1980's, professional learning consisted of time spent listening to "experts" telling teachers how they can do "more", be "better" and help more students "succeed". These experts oftentimes were not classroom teachers, and didn't fully understand the culture of the classroom or the school. The "workshop" experts often ran afoul of teachers because the teachers saw themselves as experts too, and resented school districts going outside to find the "real" professionals. Fullan (1991) in his book, *The New Meaning of Educational Change* states, "Nothing has promised so much and has been so frustratingly wasteful as the thousands of workshops and conferences that led to no significant change in practice when teachers returned to their classrooms" (p. 315).

There are many questions to be considered here. How do we get teachers to buy in to being coached? How do we align ourselves with their already complicated professional lives? What are the key components of coaching? How does the theory get linked to the practice?

Our hope is to show how classroom teachers can become successful coaches, ones that gain acceptance and respect from the teachers/colleagues they coach (Parsons & Brown, 2002). First, we will look at one coaching experience Kathy had and how this experience shaped our learning. Then we will look at the things we think are essential to know about effective coaching. We will talk about the "art" of coaching and the "science" of coaching, linking them so that you can see how important both are for successful professional learning experiences. This article is intended for beginning coaches and for those coaches who don't fully understand the importance of assessment and data gathering to their success as coaches.

Kathy's Anecdote from the Field

When I worked in one school district in the early 90's, I was working with teachers to explore ways to incorporate a "balanced literacy approach" (a term used at the time) in their classrooms. The model for this professional learning course was a two hour meeting once a week that discussed theory and how that related to classroom practice. The rest of the week I invested in working in the classrooms with teachers from the group. Unfortunately, many of the teachers were "assigned" to the group, and didn't want to be there. They built walls against change and in some cases were passive aggressive during the weekly sessions. They would sit and grade papers, or read magazines. When we broke into small group for discussions they would leave the room and return just prior to coming back together as a whole. When I tried to make time in their classrooms to work with them and their students, I was usually ignored. I had to just show up on many occasions and let the chips fall where they may.

One teacher, who I will call Mrs. Jones, in this group has always stayed in my memory. She was a first grade teacher and had been teaching over 20 years in the same district. Mrs. Jones avoided me for 8 of the 13 weeks by giving every conceivable excuse. Finally, when she thought I had given up and wouldn't be visiting her, I showed up and asked to observe as she was teaching in her literacy block. She immediately corralled the students and started in on a "phonics" lesson. This consisted of taking her pointer and asking the boys and girls to recite the sounds of the alphabet as she pointed to them. For the next fifteen minutes we were all trapped in a chorus of "ah, ah, ah – ah, ah, ah, ah, ah", "buh, buh, buh, buh, buh, buh, buh, buh". Sitting in

the back of the classroom, while I tried to pretend interest, I noticed two boys with their hands in the desk openings. The thing that caught my attention was that there were books in those openings and the boys were reading and turning the pages as quietly as they possibly could (though I don't think I could have heard those pages turn and I was sitting right next to them). Had the teacher been more observant, she might have noticed that the drills she was going through for my benefit were totally unnecessary. When the recitation finally (thankfully) stopped and she started working in her round robin reading group, I asked the boys about their reading. They were excited to be able to talk about their books and volunteered that reading was much more fun when they didn't have to do the worksheets they usually got in class. Their perception of what the process of reading was about was different from that of the teacher, and they were used to doing the drills for her and reading their books on their own.

I can't say I accomplished anything in that classroom. As the coach, I failed that teacher. I failed for a number of reasons and on a number of levels, not the least of which was that I didn't pay close enough attention to the teacher's needs. Another reason for my failure rested with the fact that the teacher was conscripted to be a part of the course and did not see any need to "change". She didn't want to be "coached". She thought her instructional practices were appropriate and that the students learned quite well from her approach. More importantly however, if I had taken more of an ethnographic stance (Guba &Lincoln, 1989), and used my ethnographic "eyes" (Frank, 1999), examining the procedures in place and finding a common teaching point with this teacher, I might have been able to be more successful. I needed to use my "coaching eyes" instead of my "teaching eyes" (Feger, Woleck, & Hickman, 2004).

As it turned out, she didn't complete the in-service and I learned from some of her colleagues that she was transferred to another school the next year. It made me think long and hard about my role and whether we can "force" anyone to change simply because their principal or district wants them to. Mrs. Jones was a constant reminder as I continued my coaching experiences that for all of my theoretical knowledge, the science of coaching could not trump the art that I so desperately needed but didn't have.

Becoming a Coach

What does it take to be a successful coach and how can that happen? One of the things that we have found is that most successful coaches have a combination of skills and talents – they have both the art and the science of coaching. We think that there are coaching protocols that can determine the success or failure of the coaching process. We believe that successful coaches:

- Should teach students on a daily basis;
- Should understand and be knowledgeable about literacy as a process;
- Should be able to use clear and concise language so as to avoid misinterpretations and confusions;
- Should be able to build relationships founded in trust and respect;
- Should be a co-learner and model by being a lead-learner;
- Should view coaching as a continuum of broad-spectrum experiences; and
- Should not practice absolutism or that coaching is a "one size fits all."

Coaches are able to see themselves as colleagues who have a different "kind" of expertise. They view themselves as classroom teachers who have taken on additional assignment for their schools. We also see successful coaches as those people who are continuous learners.

They believe that one of the hats they wear is that of co-learner in the classroom (Puig & Froelich, 2007). They are reflective and consider a broad spectrum of things before engaging in change. They are agents of change, but not "managers" of change. They model ways to change, but don't force change on others (Berry, Cadwell & Fehrmann, 1996).

Moreover, the successful coach, even though no longer working in the classroom on a full time basis, continues to work in classrooms with teachers and students (IRA Report, 2006). Although not a teacher of record, one of the most important things a literacy coach can do is work in the classroom, their laboratory, on a daily basis with students (Puig & Froelich, 2007; Casey, 2006). We're not talking about providing observation lessons to colleagues; what we are saying is that the literacy coach needs to teach regularly in a co-teaching situation. By co-teaching, the literacy coach is provided the opportunity not only to hone instructional practices, but to learn intimately about the students' strengths and needs based on close, daily, formal and informal observation.

Additionally, the literacy coach must be cognizant of the language used and social make-up of the school she is working with, both as the coach but more importantly as a co-learner. Without the development of a common language, many misinterpretations will surface and delay progress that will impact student learning. Things such as school demographics, i.e. size, ethnic configuration, etc. must also be taken into account so that there is an open line of communication. This communication is essential so confusion is kept to a minimum between the coach and the coached, and the coach and the administration.

Another key issue for professional learning is to have credibility with the faculty. A literacy coach can not garner this type of credibility if they have had little or no on-going classroom experience (Casey, 2006). In addition, it allows the coach to see first hand what impact the coaching is having on the teacher as well as the students.

Coaches are perceptive of the strengths and needs of other teachers and can use this perceptiveness to find appropriate teaching points from which they can build a working relationship with their co-workers. These are the practices that make their coaching an "art".

The science of coaching is less intrinsic and more extrinsic. As the coach, you know the theory and research that drives the practice. You see the concepts in place in the classroom, and you problem-solve collaboratively to better understand which areas need forward shifts. This is the science. The successful literacy coach knows the procedures for creating a comprehensive literacy approach. An effective literacy coach has inculcated the working systems for acquiring literacy. She or he is aware of how these working systems are assembled by students in the classroom. She or he understands the relationship they have to each other, and the necessity for each to be firmly in the students' repertoire for processing information in the classroom. These working systems include, but are not limited to, such concepts as oral language development, writing, listening skills, as well as the five working systems of reading identified by the National Reading Panel (2000). These systems are: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

Teachers know the role of assessment in the classroom and know that to be effective, assessment must be ongoing and cumulative. They know and understand the processes required in order to learn to read as well as how the process of reading and writing should play out in the classroom. The coach can demonstrate appropriate instructional practices for the teacher/colleague in addition to demonstrating instructional practices that promote teaching for strategic activities with students. Finally, she or he knows that for teachers to fully understand how a strong literacy approach works, they must see that it supports learning across the

curriculum and that it is the backbone for all academic learning. Using a comprehensive literacy approach helps make the learning across content areas appear seamless, fluidly moving from one subject to the next with strategic activities evident throughout. These core areas are consistent with what the International Reading Association (2006) in conjunction with National Council Teachers of English, National Council Teachers of Mathematics, National Science Teachers Association and National Council for the Social Studies has established as benchmark standards for literacy coaches.

In the first portion we looked at the concepts that coaching requires for success. We discussed what helps the coach create effective sessions. In the next section, we take a look at the methods we have found to help in the development of successful observations and tools for observing. We encourage you to use these to develop ones that meet your particular coaching needs.

Observation Protocols and Observational Lenses

One critical aspect of an effective and efficient literacy coach is the ability to observe and document observations. The science of documenting our observations or field notes are our memories in print. Many times we remember the gist of a situation, and in most cases that's enough, but to truly be able to coach for forward shifts, that is, coaching for changes that move the learner from stasis to new engagement, it's the critical details that will support or scaffold our efforts. Being able to draw up a precise and well-illustrated observation is important to anyone being coached. Seeing the field notes after being observed sends a powerful message to the teacher. It is very impressive to see your own words and the students' conversation in print. Not only does it reaffirm what was said, it also helps to develop intrapersonal dialogue and reflection. This makes the coaching situation far more expedient. It can be related like looking in a mirror. The teacher is able to see concrete evidence of what transpired during the lesson. As listening to children read provides the teacher a window into how students are processing, field notes help the teacher have that same window into her or his own teaching processes. Consequently, there is a lot of power in a literacy coach taking copious notes either as participant or non-participant observer. The field notes become the artifacts for the literacy coach to triangulate or crosscheck the observations (Feger, Woleck, & Hickman, 2004).

Over time, we created observation protocols in an effort to generate objective observations. These protocols or ***observation guides*** are designed to be another support system. They are intended to be open-ended to better facilitate discussion between the literacy coach and the teacher. The protocols are divided into three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. The literacy coach uses each protocol level as the need arises, from most needed to least needed supports (Puig & Froelich, 2007).

Primary Observation Protocol

In a primary protocol or guide the non-participant observer, or coach, looks for evidence of conditions in the classroom that are conducive to learning in an information-intensive environment. Available resources, furniture arrangement, student-teacher interaction, student-student interaction and proximity to each other are all critical elements of an information-intensive environment. The term information-intensive is the preferred term over print-rich

because many classrooms now have computers, televisions, VCR's, DVD players, and portable battery-operated audio players, in addition to the plethora of print material of all genres.

In using the primary protocol, the novice or developing literacy coach would enter a classroom and look for evidence that answers the questions:

1. How students are being immersed in literacy and why?
2. What literate demonstrations are being provided for the students and why?
3. Through explicit discussions, what the literacy expectations of the teacher and of the students are and why?
4. Who is being held responsible for literacy acquisition and why?
5. How are approximations, or half-rights, validated and enhanced and why?
6. What kinds of responses are taking place between teacher and students, and students and students and why?
7. What literate activities or enterprises are being employed or used?
8. Are students engaged and why (Is the task being attempted at their instructional level? Do the students understand that the teacher is there as their support?)?
9. Are the students confident that if they attempt the task they will succeed?

When using the primary observation protocol, it is critical to ask yourself all those questions, but it is more important that you only document what you hear and see. It is also critical to ask yourself why. *It's the "why" questions that will raise the coach's and the teacher's knowledge to a theoretical level and help pursue further answers to the questions* (Puig & Froelich, 2007).

When using the primary protocol, be careful that your focus is always on the students' learning, not the teacher. The kind of note taking that is being referred to as a primary protocol may create an interpersonal challenge with the teacher, depending on what you observe and document about the lesson, as well as your perceptions and questions about the observation. In other words, we need to be highly sensitive to the strengths and needs of the students and teacher being observed. "Why" questions may have the tendency to be intimidating to the person being observed. Observational notes should never offend or threaten, but should certainly prompt the literacy coach and the teacher being observed into a dialogic conversation. Although the term "dialogic" is derived from dialogue, we define a dialogic conversation as one that refers to the *logical* conversation between two colleagues. It is the interplay of ideas between two colleagues (Puig & Froelich, 2007).

This type of note taking will hone your observation skills and get you into the habit of writing exactly what you hear and see. This helps diminish, but does not necessarily eliminate, the possibility of subjective observations. Generally, no one can argue with what is heard and seen. Objective data is much less threatening to someone because they can see exactly what has been said and seen.

We recommend that if you are starting classroom observations, regardless of the coaching model you have chosen, you incorporate this type of note taking for a minimum of 21 days or 21 observations to get into the habit of exact documentation. More may be necessary. The more note taking practice you have, the more thorough your observations will become. The primary observation protocol is to collect data about what has exactly been seen and heard in the classroom.

Secondary Observation Protocol

A secondary protocol takes a deeper look into the transaction that is taking place in a classroom. In a secondary protocol, the non-participant observer/coach may be listening and documenting specific scaffolds or levels of support that are being used to promote student learning. A guide at this level provides the observer with a clearer insight into what is there. The secondary protocol builds on the experience being practiced in the first protocol. Once an observer or literacy coach has habituated precise note taking, they usually begin to refine those observations by looking for specific cues that trigger an idea or a question that will shift both the coach and the teacher being observed to a higher level of understanding.

At this level, observations may be a bit unnerving because you, as the coach, might be second-guessing your questions. For example, one question, "What were the benefits of the lesson?" might have several possible answers, leaving you with many possible choices. This may lead to questioning whether you are being subjective or objective in your observations. When using the secondary protocol, you are looking for very specific program-related teaching. In using the term "program", we do not mean a scripted or published series of materials, although it might also be this type, depending on the school or district site. Rather, we define program as a well thought out plan of instructional practices that supports students' learning. At this level of observation, a literacy coach needs to have a clear and precise understanding of literacy as a process. Otherwise, such terms as "assembling working systems" or "teaching for reciprocity" will not make any sense to either the teacher or you, as the coach. When using this level of observation, consideration needs to be given to features of a lesson, and benefits to the students. By features, we mean the actual components of the lesson. For example, if you were observing an oral guided reading lesson, ask yourself if the teacher introduced the book with sufficient scaffolding, or was the book selection appropriate? Was there an opening and a closing discussion or activity returning the students to the main idea and creating an emotional gateway to help place the main idea in long-term memory? Were there obvious benefits to the students? The term benefits means looking at what the students got out of the lesson. What was in it for them?

The observation protocols are meant to be a scaffold for you as a literacy coach. It may very well be that you will find some situations that will lend themselves to the use of one over the other, regardless of your level of expertise in literacy processing. Part of the reason will be that any time a new instructional practice or program is implemented it may be necessary to revert to a more elementary observation guide or protocol. It may also be that with new teachers or alternatively certified teachers constantly entering the field, as a literacy coach, you will encounter novice, experienced, and highly experienced teachers who have a great variety of professional strengths and needs. Thus, on any given day, you may be called upon to use any of the three observation protocols or any others that you may have designed or found in professional texts.

Tertiary Observation Protocol

After you have become proficient with the secondary protocol of observation, and based on the level of expertise of the teacher, you may want to use a tertiary protocol that will push your sense of observation further. In the tertiary protocol you will be looking for behavioral evidence of a teacher prompting based on student behavior and supporting a feed-forward and a

feedback mechanism. This is a high-level observation instrument that depends strongly on the literacy coach's theoretical understanding of literacy as a process. This level of observation looks at the feed-forward and feedback mechanisms that are in place in a classroom. Simply put, a feed-forward mechanism makes a process efficient and a feedback mechanism makes it effective (Puig & Froelich, 2007; Johnston, 1997). For example, if we are talking about reading as a process, predicting and anticipating are generally considered feed-forward mechanisms. These mechanisms assist us in making decisions before, during and (in some cases) after reading. Monitoring or checking our reading is considered feedback. Feedback mechanisms support us when something isn't right.

Along with checking our reading, we may also take into account acts of searching for further information either implicitly (in the head) or explicitly (using external resources such as a dictionary) when something being read doesn't make sense to us. Finally, we adjust our thinking and attempt to self-correct so that meaning is maintained. Consequently, our feedback mechanisms make the process effective. Although we're using reading as an example, we mean for the concept of feed-forward and feedback to be considered in all content areas of the curriculum and all contexts of learning in the classroom.

Triangulating Your Observations

Once a literacy coach has developed a theory of learning, regardless of the context, the next step should be what to observe and how to observe classroom teachers. A good place to start would be to consider triangulating or crosschecking your observations so that your coaching sessions may be more effective and efficient. In triangulating observations, you're simply crosschecking your observations with three or more sources of information. Borrowing from ethnographers, when triangulating your observations you enter an observatory situation from three angles or perspectives: participant observations, non-participant observations, and artifact collecting (Frank, 1999). *The most effective and efficient coaching sessions are those that we enter with participant observer experiences, non-participant observations, and artifact* (Puig & Froelich, 2007).

In the classroom, teachers are constantly triangulating observations to make deliberate teaching decisions. Teachers participate with students in the teaching and learning context of the classroom. During an interactive read aloud or a shared reading for example, teachers are interacting with students and simultaneously making implicit observations or assessments (Fountas & Pinnell, 2005). In independent reading, a teacher usually roves the room and observes students reading without interacting. The teacher is involved in making non-participant observations. When interaction does take place, the observational lens is switched and assessment is taken to a more informative level. This is the level the teacher uses to collect data or artifacts about the learner. Spelling tests, oral reading records and writing rubrics are examples of classroom artifacts. These artifacts are tangible items, tangible results of teacher and student output. The combination of implicit and explicit participant observations, implicit non-participant observations and explicit artifacts aids a teacher in using data to guide instruction. *Triangulating the data helps teachers develop a truer picture of the students' strengths and needs* (Puig & Froelich, 2007). Likewise, when a literacy coach enters a coaching situation equipped with participant observations, non-participant observations and artifacts, the literacy coach may develop a truer picture of the teacher's strengths and needs. In other words, the

literacy coach enters into the culture of the school and the classroom by collecting data that will support professional learning to improve student learning.

Participant observations

Our definition of participant observation in coaching is when a literacy coach is in a classroom interacting with the students and/or the teacher. We extend this definition, when coaching, to include similar or shared experiences as the person being coached (Spradley, 1980). If a literacy coach is observing a guided reading lesson, it makes for a far more powerful coaching session if the literacy coach has had a similar or shared experience of having taught guided reading; then and only then, can a literacy coach enter a coaching situation as a true co-learner. *The power in coaching is highly correlated to the degree that the literacy coach considers herself to be a co-learner* (Puig & Froelich, 2007). What does this mean for the literacy coach? It means that if the literacy coach is to become an effective coach, she must, as has been stated before, teach and interact with students on a daily basis. The literacy coach must have a high level of credibility with the teacher she is working with to develop a co-learner relationship. That credibility is developed when a literacy coach teaches students on a regular basis (Casey, 2006).

As stated earlier, many of us have been in situations where "experts" have told us how to teach a particular subject better or how to improve a certain instructional practice and the question always arises as to the expert's credibility. We often ask ourselves how long this person has taught? What kind of students did this person teach? Are they still in the classroom, and if not, how long have they been out of the classroom? These questions and many others are questions we have asked when we have encountered an "expert". Teachers need to know that the person standing in their place mirrors their experiences in the classroom.

So what do participant observations look, feel, and sound like during a coaching session? It may look and sound like as simple as, "you know I had a similar experience when…" or "I understand, because I had a similar experience when…" The look should be professional. The feeling should be comfortable and the sound should be warm and sincere. There aren't too many of us who do not appreciate stories of successes, half-successes, and challenges. Remember engagement may take place when the person being coached feels they can do it, and if they attempt it they will succeed, and if they don't succeed, the coach will be there to help out. Don't we all love to collaborate with colleagues who have similar experiences? A major benefit of participant observations is that they generally tend to level the playing field for building relationships and trust. *Relationship building is a critical aspect of effective and efficient literacy coaches* (Puig & Froelich, 2007; Casey, 2006; Dozier, 2006; Hasbrook & Denton, 2005).

Non-participant observations

The second lens that makes a coaching session effective and efficient is non-participant observations. Keep in mind that we are talking about triangulating or crosschecking our observations through different lenses. In a coaching/learning situation, non-participant observations occur when the literacy coach *does not* interact with the students or the teacher in a classroom. For example, a literacy coach would go into a classroom to observe and document only behaviors with little or no interaction. Then during the coaching session, the coach can raise honest and sincere questions based on the field notes from the class. The honest and sincere

questions are derived by the "novice", the coach, and can only be answered by the "expert", the teacher being observed (Joyce & Showers, 2002). It allows the classroom teacher to take the "expert" stance, all the while not diminishing her or his status. Think about a time when you witnessed some incredible teaching as a non-participant observer. Didn't that teacher make an impact on you and your teaching? Who's the real coach in that situation? Think also about the message that is being sent regarding the power of a literacy coach teaching children on a daily basis, when you are going to be coaching colleagues or fellow teachers?

What do you look for or look at when going into a classroom? It all depends on the type of coaching model you as the literacy coach have chosen to follow. Coaching in our opinion needs to be looked as a continuum of professional learning opportunities that spans and overlaps from overt modeling to self-selected action research. Thus, coaching takes into account the interpersonal dialogue between two people and the intrapersonal dialogue we may have when we question our actions and responses. The point is that there are many facets of coaching that are open to us, with trust generally being the catalyst. Considering coaching as a continuum assists literacy coaches in differentiating professional learning opportunities. W*hen coaching is approached as a continuum of professional learning, it diminishes resistance to a literacy coach by colleagues* (Puig & Froelich, 2007). For example, if you chose the pre-conference, observation, de-briefing model, an issue might have surfaced during the pre-conference that the teacher wants you to observe and provide a response (or feedback) to so that she or he can improve instruction as well as her or his understanding. On the other hand, if you choose a triangulation model, entering a classroom with the mindset of collecting or recalling participant observations, non-participant observations, and artifacts, an issue or coaching point may surface based on the teacher's strengths. An old Maori saying comes to mind: "highlight my strengths and my weaknesses will disappear." Both models of coaching, the pre-conference, observation, post-conference model and the triangulation model, are broad-spectrum models of coaching. Both models also may intersect and borrow concepts and protocols from each other. The difference in these models is that one brings an issue (coaching point) to the forefront before an observation (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001) and the other looks for an issue (coaching point) to surface from an observation. The latter relies heavily on mutual respect and trust. It is completely up to the literacy coach to decide which model will benefit the teacher and consequently the students. We recommend that you become acquainted with both models and any others that would help you become a proficient coach. Some situations may call for one model over another. Remember, though, that the concepts are broad-spectrum and triangulating your observations may take place in the pre-conference, observation, post-conference model; and pre-conference, observation, post-conference may take place in the triangulation model of coaching.

Artifacts

Artifacts are usually the easiest and most readily available of the three observational lenses literacy coaches use. Artifacts are also the least threatening in a coaching situation for the literacy coach and the teacher being coached. They're concrete items. What is considered an artifact for a literacy coach? Many things may be included in this category. Some artifacts that strengthen a coaching session are published materials (textbooks, novels, etc.) and student generated materials (journals, writing samples, etc.).The list is endless, but you should have a clear understanding that artifacts are generally tangible items used or produced in the classroom.

The user or producer of the artifacts may be the teacher or the student, although professional texts and field notes maybe used during a coaching session and be considered an artifact.

We firmly believe that most if not all learning is artifact mediated (Vygotsky, 1978). Consequently, the importance of using artifacts in a coaching session and the importance of collecting artifacts to inform a literacy coach cannot be stressed enough. At the same time that you, as the literacy coach, are collecting artifacts, you are also demonstrating a behavior that is critical for all teachers, to collect artifacts that will help make informed decisions about teaching and learning. These artifacts also serve to make concrete statements about explicit teaching that is taking place in the classroom. Likewise, it may lead the way to highlight what still needs to be included so that all students are engaging in an active information-intensive learning environment.

In Summary

We started our discussion by addressing the art and science of literacy coaching. In triangulating our observations through leveled protocols and thinking of coaching on a continuum, we are creating a bridge between the art and science of literacy coaching. The concept of triangulating your observation defines the perspectives or observational lenses that a literacy coach takes to make a coaching experience effective and efficient. The main point to consider is that we need to crosscheck our observations to make informed decisions about our coaching and even after we have made an informed decision, we need to have the understanding that those informed decisions are tentative and contingent on the colleagues we're coaching. When we think of coaching as a continuum of broad-spectrum experiences, we begin to adopt the concept that coaching may take us from interpersonal conversations or dialogic discourse to reflection or intrapersonal thinking.

We reviewed and discussed the lenses of participant observer, non-participant observer (which some educators refer to as neutral or detached observer), and artifact collecting as observational lens. We propose that through the use of these observational lenses, a literacy coach may acquire a truer picture of a teacher's strengths and needs. Remember, this is only one simplistic way of looking at a complex situation, but it's a concrete place to start to serve as a guide for any literacy coach. The power in this model is not in the observational lenses themselves, but in the conversations they may produce.

Additionally, there is no "one" place or stage to enter into or exit a coaching situation, and at the same time, it may be necessary to go from one end of the continuum to the other with the same person. In other words, as a literacy coach you may want to start off coaching by simply facilitating a workshop or providing an observation lesson, and progress to being involved with colleagues in action research. The options are yours and yours alone and should be based on the strengths and needs of the colleagues you work with and coach. Using the concept of triangulating your observations, you will be able to make highly informed and appropriate decisions. Experience has also taught us that the different models may and usually do overlap depending on the coaches past experiences, the teacher's experiences, and ultimately the students' experiences. There is never one straight, simple answer.

We have briefly discussed and reviewed many concepts about literacy processing and observations. We have reviewed tools to be used for observations within the context of triangulation for a truer picture of an individual's strengths and needs from an ethnographic

perspective. As literacy coaches ourselves, we have found ourselves asking:

- Which protocol has the most benefits for the teacher and ultimately the students?
- What is my understanding of literacy processing?
- What is my theory or rationale for what I've observed?
- What is my theory or rationale of how am I going to react and interact in relation to what I observed?
- What have I learned from the observation?

These are complex questions that may look simple on the surface. Generally, it will be the complex questions that will cause forward shifts in you as the coach as well as the teachers you are coaching. The idea of a primary, secondary, and tertiary protocol as observation guides are meant to refine the literacy coach's sense of observation and provide artifacts to triangulate or crosscheck the information collected. The terms primary, secondary, and tertiary instead of first, second, and third, are used to indicate increasing levels of sophistication rather than a sequential, linear order of support. This complements the concept of a continuum of coaching. We encourage you, the literacy coach, to take a critical look at these protocols and generate your own observation guides to make them more efficient and your coaching sessions more effective. From your understanding of the importance of appropriate observations, we hope you can develop creative ways to use your knowledge of how we learn most effectively to help teachers understand this about themselves and their students. In this way you will have truly linked the art of coaching to the science of coaching.

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